DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 600 FL 009 265

AUTHOR	Nostrand, Howard Lee
TITLE	Cultural Pluralism: What For? By What Means? At What Costs?
INSTITUTION	Montana Association of Language Teachers.
SPONS AGENCY	Montana Univ., Missoula.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	10p.
JOURNAL CIT	MALT; v21 p4-12 Fall 1976
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cultural Differences; Cultural Education; *Cultural Pluralism; *Ethnic Groups; *Ethnicity; Language Instruction; Language Planning; *Language Teachers; *Minority Groups; Subculture
IDENTIFIERS	Montana

ABSTRACT

The ideology of cultural pluralism has replaced that of the melting pot in the United States. Cultural pluralism can be defined as the mutual respect between individuals and between groups that differ in their life styles. The former melting pot ideology exacted a price from everyone, both from the minorities and from the group supposedly superior. Cultural pluralism, however, can also lead to problems. It can lead to a separatism that would diminish the capacity of the total interacting group of minority and majority subcultures. Cultural pluralism can also lead to dissension among the ethnic groups themselves. To be successful, cultural pluralism requires cultural planning, along with language planning. Because of their expertise in understanding and making understandable a second cluture, foreign language teachers have a unique and important role to play in planning and maintaining cultural pluralism. (CFM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

MALT and Howard Lee Nostrand

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

ED154600

CULTURAL PLURALISM: WHAT FOR? BY WHAT MEANS? AT WHAT COSTS?

This is an exciting State in which to work on cultural pluralism, because of the many cultures represented in the State. Rex Dahl's film shows how surprisingly many ethnic strains there are. It is an especially exciting place to work on cultural pluralism because of the present mature state of the relationship between these cultural strains. Rex Dahl has mentioned in presenting the film that the mayor of Butte, who has an Italian middle name, can joke with a person of Irish extraction about the Italians and the Irish, while in an earlier generation that kind of joking would have tended to lead to blows. The mature relationship is also a sign of danger, because it results from a declining toward extinction in some of the ethnic strains.

Montana is an exciting place to work on cultural pluralism, finally, because this pluralism, whatever the stage of the individual's self identification with an ethnic heritage, is related to foreign language teaching and learning, language and culture being inseparable from each other. But I'll talk more later about the special role that I think we as foreign language teachers have to play in this matter. The chart on page 12, a chart of levels of interplay between two elements of culture, will help you to understand what I mean when I talk about cultural pluralism. At the bottom, a level of application where there is great variety. Just above that, a level of synthesizing common working principles. Above that, a level of critique of the working principles. And in the top area a level of what Aristotle used to call *theoria*, contemplation, the level of ultimate explanations of reality, ultimate sanctions of morality, contemplative, speculative thought where there is again great variety. I've marked, with shading, where we can agree on questions about the roads to truth, proper methods, proper values. But we don't agree on the ultimate answers in a democratic society. Down lower there is a wide band of common cultural content in a pluralistic, democratic society. We can agree on common working principles, a consensus as to what we are trying to do and how we can go about it, even though we don't agree on ultimates. There is a great deal of misunderstanding, in our American society, of the relationship between ultimate beliefs, where we disagree, and the possibility of consensus on common working principles, a common achievement of a democratic society, of a civilization. They're having a good deal of trouble at Tacoma, -- and they're not different from the rest of us, -- with a program that they call the Tacoma Ethical Quest. It started out as "values clarification," a term that educationists have been using. They had to abandon that. They're still having trouble, because many parents feel that if they're talking about values in school, this involves, inevitably, the ultimate beliefs on which they sense they differ from other parents. One of the things that we need to do, if we are to take intellectual leadership in cultural pluralism, is to help the general public and our students distinguish between the differing ultimate beliefs in a democratic society, and the possibility of synthesis of common working principles in spite of the differences.

FL009265

We'd better define cultural pluralism. How about "mutual respect between individuals and between groups that differ in their lifestyles"? Not necessarily ethnic, but mutual respect between individuals and betwee.

individuals and between groups that differ in their lifestyles. Is that an acceptable definition? We can try it out for fit. It does obscure some implications which go beyond the definition: implications that are essential to the meaning-in-action of cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism, after all, is a rather new thing in the United States. We are shifting our nationwide description of what we are trying to do, from "the melting pot" to "cultural pluralism." We don't know an awful lot about it. I know perhaps less than you here in Montana. It makes one modest to come over here and talk about this subject because so much is going on that is really sophisticated.

The implications beyond the definition, which we ought to keep in mind, are, obviously, economic discrimination against a group that has less power, legal and political consequences, and housing discrimination, which underlies the busing issue. And not only these economic and legal-political ramifications that we are aware of, but also ramifications in the matter of foreign relations. Congresswoman Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, who is also the chairperson of Black Caucus, mentioned recently on TV that there are Afro-Americans who feel their destiny is in Africa. You can see the implication for foreign relations, in connection with the Secretary of State's current trip to Africa. There are Chicanos who feel the same about la rasa, and identify with the Latin-American countries on issues like the future of the Panama Canal. So cultural pluralism imposes problems of mutual respect in the matter of foreign policy, problems that are not at all easy to resolve.

Then there are the problems of abuse of ethnic identification. Take the case, for example, of a person of Swedish origin married to a woman who is one-fourth Indian, and who thereby acquires special fishing rights in the Seattle area. Abuses of that sort cause a great deal of friction, and they increase as we try to respect ethnic identities.

Why get into all this? What for? One reason alone suffices to turn me from the former melting pot ideology: its cost to human beings, both of the minorities and of the group led to feel superior. I was of the latter group. I'm not fully a WASP, because my Dutch ancestors were a vanquished minority, conquered by the British after having honestly bought Manhattan Island (for 24 dollars). But nevertheless, I've behaved as a WASP. I've seen the humiliation of children where I was brought up, in New York City, whose parents had a foreign accent. And children are made to feel ashamed of their parents for not being WASPS. I've contributed to this on at least one occasion as a teacher. I was a student teaching Latin in a New York City high school and one poor little girl of Polish ancestory happened to pronounce the word worship, warship. Instead of doing what I do now, and saying "Well, we're all up against this spelling the history of words as we write the English Language," I got an easy laugh out of the class. The face of that poor little girl taught me something that I shall never forget.

If we ever out-grow this attitude toward foreign accents and any foreign stereotypes, I don't think we ever will, because I think it is endemic in raw human nature -- if we ever do out-grow this attitude toward outgroups, then there are other reasons for cultivating cultural pluralism, that seem to me of great importance, beyond the damage that the melting pot ideology does to many individuals.

One of these other reasons is the fact that a single culture narrows a person. You can not be ethnocentric and fully realized as a human being.

Another reason is the fact that the dominating-dominated relation, which arises between groups, loads up on the same pole with selfishness, to produce discrimination.

Still another is the fact that Americans must learn to behave as a minority, on a world scene made up of a plurality of cultures in which we are not even in the majority minority group of cultures. As a nation we are part of the white minority on the globe.

And still another, if we need more reasons, is the fact that ethnic loyalties are a rising force in the world today, just as surely as the nation-state is a declining force, on its way to either extinction or to such modification that a few decades from now, it won't be what arose in the 16th century. The nation-state can not provide national security, and the harder we hang on to it, the more obvious it becomes that it is not the means, nor is the arms race the means, to nationaly security. We need more imagination, we need to recognize ourselves as a minority that has to persuade, hence to know its neighbors, instead of throwing its weight around.

The planners of this Conference have added to my original list another improtant question about cultural pluralism: At what age? From infancy on, the family language, I propose, should be the child's first and basic language. And this entails the contention that the basic culture of the child should be the culture of which that language is an integral part. As soon as practicable, the child should become bilingual, and he should move on from being ethnocentric within Chicano, Black or another minority culture. I don't know just what the range of good bi-culturalism is, but at least he should become at home in the surrounding culture, or neighboring culture. There is a good new book by Mario Fantini, who has been one of the officers of the Ford Foundation, called Language Acquisition of the Bilingual Child. This book summarizes more than has been done in the earlier individual case studies.

Here family culture, as now happens often in Montana, is already modified, and is more a memory and a hobby of self-identification than an independent lifestyle competing with the surrounding lifestyle, I think that the ethnic background, the stories of the family culture, biographies that embody the values and the language of the culture, ought to enter into the child's life as he can assimilate them. One of the best chances of getting beyond growing out of ethnocentrism is, after all, the chance of self-identification with some other culture than the local majority culture. I find that even though my Dutch ancestors are three centuries back, I have a special interest in Dutch culture, even though there were almost no traces of it when I grew up. Oh, there was one family in which a little boy my age, Peter Verweis, always said, "grace" in Dutch when he came to visit. That custom has stayed on from before the conquest by the British in 1664, and I grew up some time after that.

The danger, though, is that the immature person will conclude that his tradition is superior: that each value of the in-group, represented by a biography related to him by a person belonging to that culture, is matched by the opposite disvalue in out-groups. And this danger brings us to the question, At what cost, cultural pluralism?

Cultural pluralism is a difficult idea. It is contrary to raw human nature. It is natural for human beings to feel secure with an in-group and to disparage an out-group. Cultural pluralism is pulled toward the disparaging of out-groups. Fran and I worked during the difficult years in Seattle of the late 60's, with a Black group that was toward the militant side of the spectrum, and had the confidence of the Black Panthers. We heard our Black friends there saying, "You know, in Africa, it's different. They don't like angles or corners. Nothing is abrupt. Their houses are round." Well, this kind of myth is a beautiful thing, but it implies that others have corners on their houses. You can't really enjoy the excellence of an in-group without implying that other groups are inferior. And where Black people are suffering from the constant implication that they are inferior, to the point of self-hate being a main psychological problem of individuals, naturally they overreact to glorify, adulate their own cultural background, as they imagine it; and this enevitably results in the disparagement of other cultures.

Cultural pluralism is pulled not only toward disparagement of out-groups, but toward a separatism that cuts down the capacity of the total interacting group of minority and majority subcultures: the capacity to produce abundance for all. And heaven knows how strong the argument for separatism is, when that abundance, to which the minority has contributed, is captured by a power elite.

Cultural pluralism gets pulled, finally, toward dissension among the ethnic groups themselves, in a later stage of this self-adulation of ethnic groups. There was a case not long ago at the University of Washington. A project proposal was being drafted to help Chicanos, a particularly needy group. Other ethnic groups got wind of the fact that the project proposal was being drafted, and they began bickering among themselves about how much of the pie each one should get, so that the deadline passed and the proposal was not ready to be presented. Nobody got anything. That kind of relationship is one of the dangers that cultural pluralism is prone to. So some cost is inevitable.

Naturally we are going to keep the cost to a minimum, and this brings us to the big question, by what means should we try to minimize the dangers and maximize the benefits of this new American ideal, cultural pluralism? I have said so much about the detriments of the melting pot theory that I ought to say a good word for it, so that we bear in mind that we haven't just invented sliced bread. Theodore Roosevelt, in the early twentieth century, said "There is no place in this country for people with a divided loyality, a loyality to another culture. What we need to do is get together and produce together." In fact, he said in that statement that there is no place for people who want to maintain a former ethnic connection. Well, one must keep in mind that the melting pot was a rather necessary thing in the 19th century and still in the early 20th. The danger of losing the necessary minimum of cultural cohesion necessary for cooperation to produce a nation required something like the melting pot. And Theordore Roosevelt, himself, had an idealistic side to this perpetuation of the melting pot ideology. He was combating the trusts, as you remember; Altistair Cooke reminded us of this on a TV program not long ago. Roosevelt was combating Andrew Carnegie, who employed Hungarians to break a strike where Italians were the workers. Carnegie was using ethnic diversity to the disadvantage of all the people. Then, I believe, the Hungarians got on the inside of the steel-factory labor group, and they struck. Carnegie employed Rumanians or some other group to break that strike. One could always get cheap labor from some group that, after all, was improving its prior status by being cheap labor. So the history is complicated, and it would be unworthy of us as untellectual leaders,

persons who have an education and can read and study, to say, "Oh, the melting pot. Look at what imbeciles those people were in the 19th and early 20th century; how enlightened we are." We must watch out, we have costs on this side too, that are a real problem.

Cultural pluralism, to be successful, requires cultural planning. Michael Novak of the Rockefeller Foundation, has written a preface for a working paper on Ethnic Study, which is generally very good, by Richard Gambino, a member of President Ford's council on the bicentennial. Michael Novak in his preface that I recommend to you, talks about a "cultural ecology." This requires planning on two scales or levels: within the ethnic group, and in the society as a whole, the locus of the relations among ethnic groups. Cultural planning is not a new thing. Priesthoods have long used cultural planning to impose an ideology, a form of a culture, on a population. Not only priesthoods, but political leaders. The unification of France, was achieved by imposing one sub-culture, that of Ile de France, and one dialect of the language. Intellectuals, as well as political and religious leaders, have engaged in culture planning. The French education system is a model of it, and the local community education system involves a kind of culture planning, tending to go too far toward celebrating ethnic origins.

George Denemark, a refreshing thinker who is Dean of Education at the University of Kentucky, observes that teacher education can well go too far toward just consisting of a practicum within the community.[1] The teacher (and this applies to us as teachers of foreign languages) needs to have a professional view that is larger than the local relations of ethnic groups within one community. There is a danger that the persons promoting cultural pluralism and ethnic identities in a rather narrow way will bias teacher education and curriculum planning. But we do need planning, and planning needs in turn a broad, professional perspective, both within the group and between groups. We want something rather different, I think, from the kind of cultural planning that has been usual in the past.

One of the differences between old forms of cultural planning and what I propose results from individual freedom. It is not so easy to abuse cultural planning where individuals have a mind of their own: where we deliberately seek independence of judgment rather than malleability, respect for the authority of the central culture-planning group.

Another difference lies in our ideal of intergroup relations, which is lot harder to carry out than the ideal represented in the Crusades. That kind of intercultural relation was relatively easy to conceive.

Another factor that makes a difference is the large scale of our political democracy. Democracy was easy on the scale of the city-state, compared with the scale of a nation the size of the United States. The decision-making process is extremely difficult nationally; and at the same time, we are now involved in

[1]George W. Denemark, "Chapter 6, an alternative report," pp. 211-217 in Teacher Education in the United States: The Responsibility Gap; A report by the Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Education of Teachers (Paul A. Olson, Director). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976. In the same volume, pp. 219-224, see the abrasively biased but instructive "Definition of Cultural Pluralism" drafted by the chairperson of the Commission's Cultural Pluralism Committee, Antonia Pantoja.

international planning, within groups of nations and worldwide. So cultural planning is a lot harder than it was when people were willing to settle for less than we would settle for now.

Still another change is that language planning has been introduced. The problem of maintaining languages, the problem of bringing languages up to date lexically so that they can take a constructive, competent part in the modern world. This is the kind of language planning pioneered by Inar Haugen, a Scandinavian minority-group representative who just retired from Harvard last June; and the kind of thing that Jean Viet is working on: the immense inter-language lexicon of technical terms for the Council for Europe. Language planning expands and complicates our problem.

Now the enthusiasm for a difficult task like culture planning, and the language planning involved in it, is bound to rise and decline. The task demands what Sartre calls, "un group en fusion," a group in which the members want to fuse separate purposes into a common purpose. That kind of situation does not last. Difficult within a group, it is well nigh impossible between groups to maintain enthusiasm for developing cultural pluralism, as we encounter the "bugs" that inevitably develop and discourage us.

The cultural ecology that Michael Novak talks about, which is just as necessary as the development of group consciousness within the group, runs into obstacles that are almost prohibitive. I suggest that we can visualize what we are trying to do together, (and that is a big part of being able to do it), by utilizing a curve proposed by a French engineer, Marcel Boisot. This curve is a much more constructive, promising conceptualization, I think, than the notion of "permanet revolution" that the Chinese are using, a notion, incidentally, not so far from Jefferson's "right to revolution"; but the revolution can become too chaotic, too destructive. This curve of Marcel Boisot's has two axes. The vertical axis indicates the intensity of self-identification with an ethnic group or cult; the horizontal axis represents time. He observes that an ideology "since he worked this out for ideologies" an ideology tends to rise to a peak of intensity and then declines to extinction. It rises and falls in seven identifiable stages. They are not exactly applicable to what we are after, but the principle is applicable. And he proposes, instead of just letting the ideology's intensity fall from its peak to extinction, introducing booster forces at a desired point, boosting up again toward the peak of the curve; then when the decline starts again, reboosting it, so that you have a band of waves, produced by culture planning, instead of the one rise and fall. This conceptualization of the objective helps us to see a common purpose on the two scales: within the ethnic group itself, the maintaining of a desirable intensity of identification; and within the shared society, the desirable warmth of intergroup relations.

The common purpose has to be hammered out. I am not going to try to formulate it for the groups involved, but it certainly includes the defining of a desirable waveband between the excessive intensity that we used to have in Montana, when the groups were on slight provocation out for each other's throats, and the deficient intensity where we lose the benefits to be had from cultural pluralism. Since the boosting is difficult, we need to be selective about those features of our ethnic traditions that we want to maintain: not try to maintain everything, lock, stock and barrel. Costumes do not matter, perhaps. Trivialities are not the values we are after.

What are the stages? I don't really know. Boisot's seven stages for an ideology start with the original prophet and end with extinction. A French sociologist that I admire, Andrée Michel, observes three stages in dealing with an oppressed minority and an oppressing majority. First, submission by the minority, then revolt, and then a new, more or less improved relation between the minority and the majority. That comes closer, but is not what what we are after, and does not help us to define the desirable waveband: where it is that we want to start boosting and how high we want to boost before we get to the excessive intensity we had here in the 19th century. I suggest Joshua Fishman's writings, especially his Language Loyalties in the United States, as one good place to look for identifiable stages in this curve that we want to modify by cultural planning. Michael Novak says in his preface to Mr. Gambino's paper on ethnic studies, that the Rockefeller Foundation is interested in good scholarship applied to understanding each other's culture. I suggest that our problem is not only to understand individual cultures, but to understand the planning by which we mean to do something about the plurality of cultures.

Why should language teachers be engaged in this? What reasons do we have to become intellectual leaders in culture planning? I suggest three points. One, we are concerned to make a culture understood. Margaret Meed points out in the Festschrift that some of my friends surprised me with, that the language teacher continues trying to understand one culture as a life work, maybe two cultures, while anthropologists, sociologists and the other social scientists, looking for humanity-wide generalizations, move from one culture to another. Margaret Meed says "It is to you we must look for an understanding in depth of any one culture." Language teachers are concerned with the aspect of cross-cultural education that Novak talks about: understanding, and making understandable a second culture.

We are also concerned with the relations between cultures, because we live our professional life at the friction point between cultures in contact. We see a great deal of culture shock.

Thirdly, we are concerned for persons, our students and others, as they experience the disturbing "Copernican step" from the absolute world of a single culture, which is so comforting and so narrowing, to the relativistic world of a plurality of cultures: Copernican step in the sense that just as Copernicus discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe, so, in discovering other cultures, we discover we are not so unique to God and the angels and their lifestyle as we thought we were when we were ethnocentric.

If language teachers do in fact have a unique role of intellectual leadership to play in planning and maintaining cultural pluralism, this should affect our teaching more than it does, and likewise our teacher education, our recruiting of future specialists in foreign languages, our part in community education: in the education both of the majority and of the minorities. I was astonished to find, when I took part in a conference in New Jersey, where they have problems very similiar to the problems you have here in Montana, that in the State Department of Education we were advising, all the effort in majority-minority relations was being expended on educating the minority, on getting the Chicano to eliminate a foreign accent so he would not arouse the prejudice of the hiring officer. No attention to the hiring

officer, and how he might be involved in this intercultural education. In our community relations, the community's self-education ought to have a much more extensive part than it has had. We need to change also our relation to research; particularly, to utilize what the social sciences offer us. And our support of the activities of organizations like MALT, is extremely important for adding up drops in the same bucket so that we get somewhere with our good intentions.

Let me focus on three of our functions: teaching, teacher education and recruiting. There are changes needed in American culture, changes that I think are possible through schooling and through community education, yet I doubt that without our leadership these changes will get very far.

One change is that we must play down competition, even more than we have: Americans should learn to strive for an ideal, compare ourselves against an ideal performance rather than strive for superiority over another. Even Richard Gambino, so preoccupied with sophisticated ideals in his work paper on ethnic studies, says in one connection America "could be first." The problem is that any time we claim to be first, or that "By golly, we'er going to be first," we are insensitive toward other people who do not want to be told "We are assigning you the role of second fiddle." We must overcome this notion that we hear in most of the political campaigners today. "America is first, and if it isn't we'll be first whomever we have to trample on." So we must play down the easy satisfaction of "I'm doing better than he is." We must substitute driving to a higher level of abstraction, the level of an idea, and compare ourselves with a performance objective for ourselves. This is a task for all teachers, but language teachers have a unique chance to apply the principle to our peoples.

Another change we can work on through our teaching is the one that the chart on page 12 helps one to visualize. We must learn to separate the effort toward consensus from the diversity of ultimate beliefs. We need to do this as foreign language teachers because we are concerned about relations between cultures, and about the relations between cultures in a democratic society. But also, as foreign language teachers we have a particular advantage for getting across the difficult point that we can differ as to ultimate sanctions of morality, ultimate explanations of reality, and still find a consensus as to what we are trying to accomplish together: common working principles. We can get this across because it is part of our subject matter to penetrate empathically into a different way of life from the one that one has been brought up in.

Concerning teacher education, I have mentioned already that it can easily be too attached to the community. We think of this as "practical." But it is a wise observation that "there is nothing more practical than sound working thoery." The teacher needs to be able to see at some remove the local problems of ethnic relations within the community teaching. Just practice teaching, in just one cummunity is not, as it was proposed in the USOE report that George Denemark dissented from, sufficient training for a teacher of a foreign language. His education has the responsibility of freeing him from parochialism, enabling him to rise above it to a self-concept as an educator who helps others grow from narrowness

to breadth of understanding.

Finally, our problem of recruiting the next generation of language teachers. I do not mean we should proseltize, but rather that we should make language learning such as to attract first-rate minds. We tend to get into language teaching a certain number of people that were good in the beginning at imitating noises, and remain just good at imitating noises. We need to see that our teaching has substance, that we are not just teaching French phrases but something about lifestyle. Students are interested in this, and they are forcing us to deal with something more significant than just language as a self-sufficient pursuit, something more than "culture" taught as isolated details like the shape of French doorknobs, something more than "literature" taught as unmotivated phrases or structures. In sum, it is only by making our teaching more significant that we may hope to get our share, as the physicists are for example getting their share, of the vigorous minds in the next generation, so that our successors will be able to build a pluralistic world upon the mere foundation which is all that my generation, at least, will be able to say we have contributed to the edifice.

LEVELS OF INTERPLAY
BETWEEN THE PROCESS AND CONTENT OF CULTURE

(The shading represents areas of essential common content.)

The Process of Culture: activity of thought, will, and feeling	The Essential Content of a Culture: Methods, World picture, Values
The theoretic life: disinterested inquiry artistic creation mystical experience	Ultimate questions as to: the roads to truth; the nature of what is; the desirable The diverse ultimate doctrines Culture-wide postulates (unproved assumptions)
Critique: the questioning of accepted ideas	Dissatisfactions with accepted working principles
Synthesis: the consolidating of present knowledge	Culture-wide working principles
Application: the adapting of principles to cases	Technologies; Descriptions of concrete situations; Immediate purposes

From: Howard Lee Nostrand, The University and Human Understanding. Seattle: University of Washington, Copyright 1963.

Howard Lee Nostrand
University of Washington